

# ILLINOIS STATE FAIR

PROFESSIONAL ART SHOW

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# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIR PROFESSIONAL ART EXHIBITION

The Illinois State Fair Professional Art Exhibition is the only open, multi-media competitive exhibit currently fostering participation in all parts of Illinois. For thirty years it has existed as a proving ground for aspiring young artists, and a showcase for more established artists. During that time, acceptance into the State Fair Exhibit has sounded a note of encouragement to unknowns seeking recognition and a chance to see how well their work could stand when placed side by side with pieces by more seasoned professionals. Those encouraged include some of the "who's who" of Illinois art, including names such as Ivan Albright (1947), Max Kahn (1947 and 48), and Gertrude Ambercrombie (1948).

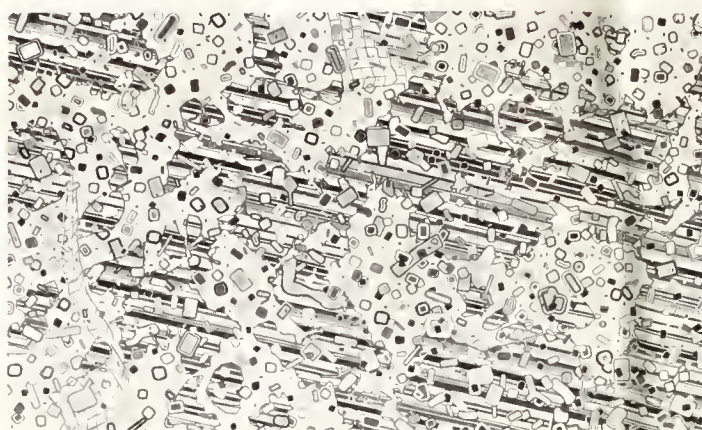
Approximately 800,000 individuals who attend the fair each year have the opportunity to view the Illinois State Fair Professional Art Exhibit. This number includes a public which might never seek out an art exhibition in the more formalized setting of a museum or gallery. They are provided an opportunity to experience the world of painting, sculpture, printmaking, the various crafts, and infinite combinations of the media, all uniquely used and ready to intrigue the receptive eye.



1 The first recipient of the Governor's Purchase Award was James D. Butler of Edwardsville in 1974 with his 89" x 60" acrylic painting entitled "Up the Down Staircase the Hard Way." The painting is shown on display at the Illinois State Museum.



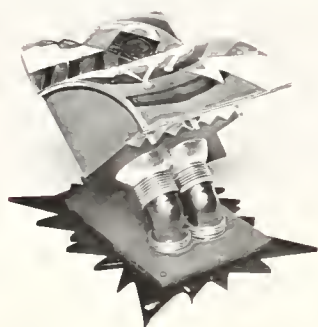
2 "Six Little Ponies All in a Row," a pencil drawing by Stephen Metcalf of Rock Island, became part of the permanent collection of the Illinois State Museum in 1976 when it was chosen to receive the Governor's Purchase Award.



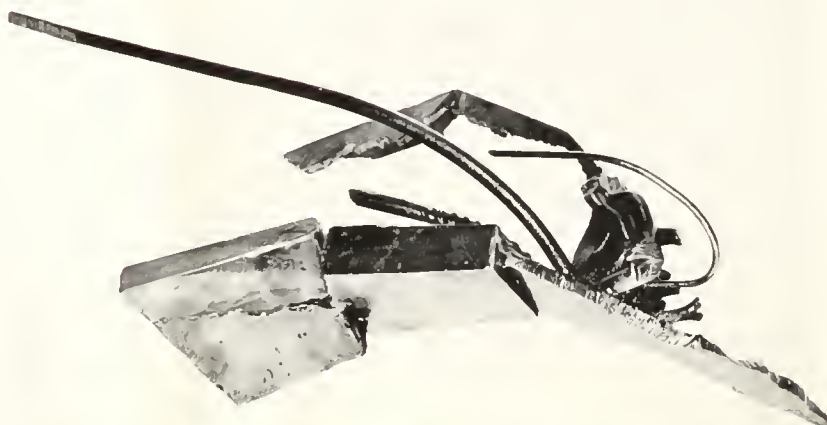
3 The largest work in the 1977 State Fair Professional Exhibition was also the one jurors selected to name as the recipient of the Governor's Purchase Award. Jerry Foley's 144" x 96" acrylic painting was done in three sections and is titled "The Playground, My Toy." Foley is from Urbana.



4 A regular in the Illinois State Fair Professional Exhibit, Harold L. Gregor of Bloomington was the 1975 winner of the Governor's Purchase Award. The 66" x 60" work, "Illinois Landscape #6" is done in oil and acrylic.



5 A 4" x 6" x 4 1/2" container composed of metal, enamel, and plastic won the top prize in the craft category in 1977. The work, "Arc Angle," was by J. T. Reardon of Champaign.



10 Springfield sculptor Michael A. Dunbar's steel work entitled "Hunter Jack '45" was named to receive the second award in sculpture in 1977. The piece measures 24" x 12" x 8".



6 Both visual and verbal puns are employed by Ken Holder of Bloomington, another exhibit regular, in his acrylic painting "Painting Holder (Balanced Rock)." In the painting, Holder portrays himself holding another of his paintings.



8 Exhibiting popular pieces in both 1976 and 1977, Jay Songero's oil painting "Wraps #12" is illustrated here. His subject matter, satin ribbons depicted in a super-realistic manner, led him to be chosen the winner of the Kemper Insurance Company's purchase prize in 1977. Songero is from Dalton.



9 Combining tradition and whimsy, Jeffrey Reimann's oil and acrylic painting, "Wading the River, Dropping a Line" was second in painting in 1977 and was also a favorite among voters for the popular prize.



11 Quincy's Robert Mejer was winner of second prize in watercolor with his "Ox-Bow Studio Chair" in 1977.

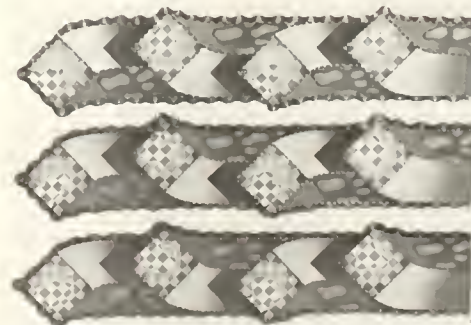


12 Carl Hayano's meticulously crafted acrylic painting "Silver Gemini Elizabeth" appeared in the 1977 exhibit. Hayano is from DeKalb.

Cash prizes and purchase awards have played a large role in the perpetuation and growth of the Illinois State Fair Professional Exhibition. The State Fair Agency in 1977 provided \$750 in prize money for each of five media categories. The purchase prizes cultivated by the show's coordinators have provided an additional impetus for entering the competition. Each year since 1974 a \$1000 purchase prize known as the Governor's Purchase Award has gone to an artist whose entry then becomes part of the permanent collection of the Illinois State Museum. The award not only provides financial remuneration for the artist, but also adds the honor of having his work become part of the collection of a well recognized institution.

The funds for the Governor's Purchase Award must be solicited each year from patrons throughout the state. Patrons have included businesses, individuals, and organizations contributing amounts from \$10 to \$100. All receive recognition in the exhibit catalog, and may claim a tax deduction for the amount of their gift.

Other purchase prizes are provided by various art related firms and supply houses, and major businesses which have corporate art collections. These purchase awards gratify both the artist who sells his work, having it become part of a major corporate collection, and the purchaser as well, who receives the work to enrich his environment.



13 1977's top sculpture award went to Frank Berkenkotter for his work "Requiem." The subtle wooden relief sculpture invokes images of rock shelves and slate quarries.

This project is paid for by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council

CREDITS: Photos 1 and 4 to the Illinois State Museum, all others to Jim Hawker